

Press release***Successful Demonstration of Workflow Interoperability a Major Milestone*****International Vendors Link Business Processes Over Heterogeneous Networks Using Coalition Standard**

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BRUSSELS, Belgium (July 9, 1996): The Workflow Management Coalition (WfMC), a non-profit international organization of workflow vendors, customers and consultants, today announced that it gave the first successful live demonstration of its Workflow Interoperability (Interface 4) specification at the Workflow Canada Conference in Toronto on June 11, 1996. An international audience of over 200 professionals witnessed the demonstration, which included seven WfMC member companies. CSE Systems, DEC, IBM, Microsoft, Staffware, and Wang, participated in a Supply Chain Management scenario using their implementation of the Coalition's specification for interoperability between workflow engines. Workflow Solutions Group, also a Coalition member, coordinated the project and provided the demonstration's network infrastructure.

Supply Chain Interoperability

The demonstration was divided into three scenarios based on a supply chain model in which there exist a number of collaborating organizations, each of which depends on its workflow system to accomplish work. The scenarios were 1) Retailer Replenishment Direct from the Distributor, 2) Retailer Replenishment via Third Party Warehouse, and 3) Retailer and Distributor Stock Replenishment, including the need for customs documentation from the trucking company's Bonding Department. The six products involved were run in three heterogeneous environments, incorporating servers and clients on UNIX, Windows, Windows NT, and OS/2. Mail delivery was routed via a Windows NT DNS Server, and the client stations were connected using Ethernet 10BaseT. There are currently two bindings defined for the Workflow Interoperability specification, both of which were demonstrated. These are MIME (Multipurpose Internet Mail Extensions), and MAPI-WF (MAPI Workflow Framework).

Success in a Critical Area Prior to the actual demonstration, the participating vendors had tested each stage of each scenario via Internet e-mail interaction. The success of these tests confirmed the WfMC's position that this level of integration, whereby the capabilities of multiple workflow products can communicate and cooperate in data exchange and process hand-offs, offers substantial end-result benefits for organizations that are extending their business processes to include suppliers, business

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partners, and customers. The demonstration's objective of rapidly getting manufactured goods from the production line into retail stores, and providing early notice and coordination of business processes across a number of cooperating organizations, becomes reality.

According to a survey conducted at Gartner Group's 1995 Integrated Document and Office Systems Conference, potential workflow benefits such as these are generally accepted, but "the largest percentage of respondents (23 percent) said immaturity of technology and lack of standards are the greatest barriers to broader acceptance of workflow." The survey went on to predict that the WfMC Interoperability specification would help solve this problem by allowing enterprises to "manage business processes that span intraenterprise and interenterprise boundaries."

The unequivocal success of the Workflow Canada demonstration shows the veracity of this prediction. The demonstration graphically depicted the ease with which the specification overcomes the stumbling blocks commonly associated with the extreme complexity of network building across multiple heterogeneous platforms.

Major Milestone Achieved -- Real Viability of Workflow Solutions Proven

Professor Marvin Manheim of the J.L. Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University, and co-founder and co-Chair of the Black Forest Group, introduced the Interoperability demonstration by saying, "This demonstration was a major milestone not only for workflow, but more importantly, for users of information technology in general. Increasingly, users are discovering that significant business processes require interactions among multiple business entities. Since organizations have workflow systems from multiple vendors, it is essential to support the flow of these processes across the entire enterprise. Workflow integration capabilities will enable new forms of process integration beyond anything that businesses have yet developed, and will significantly alter the nature of global business competition. The Workflow Management Coalition's Supply Chain example shows how significant this can be."

Rick Uy, a Coalition member and Senior Technology Systems Analyst at the Royal Bank of Canada, summed up the significance of the demonstration by commenting, "The Coalition's Workflow Interoperability demonstration should give any organization implementing or evaluating a workflow product a certain level of confidence. Not only does it prove the viability of workflow technology as a solution for integrating different systems and applications, but it should also give customers a comfortable feeling that even vendors with different products and platforms have the potential to work together to achieve a goal. We look forward to seeing workflow vendors take advantage of the Coalition's standards and specifications."